

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 BANGKO 00651 061108Z  
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O R 060950Z JAN 78  
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7661  
INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 0651

EXDIS

HONG KONG PLEASE PASS TO ASSISTANT SECRETARY HOLBROOKE AND  
AMBASSADOR WHITEHOUSE

EO 11652: XGDS-4  
TAGS: MOPS, OVIP, VM, LA, CB  
SUBJ: LAOTIANS AND CAMBODIANS COMMENT ON VIET-CAMBODIAN BATTLE

REF: VIENTIANE 1680

SUMMARY: LAOTIAN OFFICIALS WHO ACCOMPANIED LAOTIAN CHIEF OF  
STATE PRINCE SOUPHANOUVONG ON VISIT TO CAMBODIA IN DECEMBER  
HAVE TOLD LEFTIST WESTERN JOURNALIST THAT THE PREMIER VISITED  
CAMBODIA TO MEDIATE THE VIET-CAMBODIAN BORDER CONFLICT. CAM-  
BODIANS SPURNED HIS OFFER. CAMBODIAN EMBASSY OFFICIALS TOLD  
SAME JOURNALIST THAT THEY EXPECT VIETNAMESE TO TAKE TAKEO AND  
PREY VANG BUT NOT PHNOM PENH IN ORDER TO PRODUCE CHAOS IN  
CAMBODIA AND THE FALL OF THE PRESENT REGIME. END SUMMARY.

1. LEFTIST WEST EUROPEAN SCHOLAR-JOURNALIST, WITH EXCELLENT  
CONTACTS THROUGHOUT INDOCHINA, DISCUSSED IN THE PAST FEW DAYS  
LAOTIAN CHIEF OF STATE PRINCE SOUPHANOUVONG'S DEC 17-22  
VISIT TO CAMBODIA WITH LAOTIAN OFFICIALS WHO ALSO MADE THE  
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PAGE 02 BANGKO 00651 061108Z

TRIP. OFFICIALS TOLD THE JOURNALIST THAT MEDIATION OF THE  
CAMBODIAN-VIETNAMESE BORDER DISPUTE AT THE BEHEST OF HANOI  
WAS THE REASON FOR THE TRIP. SOUPHANOUVONG CARRIED PROPOSAL  
FROM HANOI THAT NEGOTIATIONS BE UNDERTAKEN IMMEDIATELY IN  
ATTOPEU, LAOS. CAMBODIANS WERE, HOWEVER, ADAMANT IN THEIR  
REFUSAL. CAMBODIANS ASSERTED THAT IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO  
NEGOTIATE ON LAOTIAN SOIL BECAUSE OF THE PRESENCE OF VIETNAMESE

TROOPS IN LAOS. IT WAS, MOREOVER, ALSO IMPOSSIBLE TO NEGOTIATE WITH HANOI SO LONG AS VIETNAMESE FORCES REMAINED ON CAMBODIAN TERRITORY. NEGOTIATIONS COULD OCCUR, IN HANOI OR PHNOM PENH, AS SOON AS THE TROOPS LEFT CAMBODIA.

2. JOURNALIST COMMENTED THAT LAOTIANS SEEMED SINCERELY SAD THAT THEIR MEDIATION EFFORTS HAD FAILED TOTALLY.

3. LAO ALSO TOLD HIM THAT PURPOSE OF SOUPHANOUVONG'S VISIT TO KOMPONG SOM WAS TO FIND ANOTHER TRANSPORT ROUTE FROM THE SEA TO LAOS AS ALTERNATIVE TO SUPPLY THROUGH THAILAND.

4. DURING TWO HOUR VISIT JAN 4 TO CAMBODIAN EMBASSY IN VIENTIANE, JOURNALIST ALSO DISCUSSED THE PARROT'S BEAK WAR WITH CAMBODIAN EMBASSY OFFICERS. CAMBODIANS ASSERTED THAT VIETNAMESE INTENDED TO TAKE TAKEO AND PREY VANG SOUTH AND EAST OF PHNOM PENH BUT THEY DID NOT RPT NOT ANTICIPATE AN ATTEMPT TO TAKE PHNOM PENH. IN THEIR VIEW, VIETNAMESE HOPED TO PRODUCE CHAOTIC SITUATION IN CAMBODIA WHICH WOULD LEAD TO FALL OF THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT AND THE INSTALLATION OF A REGIME MORE PLIABLE TO VIETNAMESE DESIGNS. CAMBODIANS LAMENTED TEARFULLY, THE JOURNALIST SAID THAT CAMBODIA HAS NO FRIENDS AND THAT THEIR COUNTRY WAS UNDER ATTACK FROM EVERYONE. IN DESCRIBING TO THE JOURNALIST THE BACKGROUND OF THE PRESENT BATTLE, CAMBODIANS SAID THAT CAMBODIA HAD REPEATEDLY LOST TERRITORY FOR THE PAST HUNDRED YEARS. CAMBODIA MUST NOT LOSE ANOTHER INCH OF TERRITORY, THEY  
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PAGE 03 BANGKO 00651 061108Z

SAID, AND FOR THIS REASON CAMBODIA HAS VIGOROUSLY DEFENDED ITS BORDERS AND TERRITORY.

5. COMMENT: JOURNALIST HAS REPORTED TO US ACCURATELY IN THE PAST. BASED ON HIS AND OTHER EVIDENCE, WE TEND TO ACCEPT VIEW THAT PRIMARY PURPOSE OF SOUPHANOUVONG'S VISIT TO CAMBODIA WAS AS ENVOY FOR HANOI. SOUPHANOUVONG HAS LONG RECORD OF CLOSE ASSOCIATION WITH VIETNAMESE AND WAS A LONGTIME RESIDENT OF HANOI. PUBLIC STATEMENTS, ABSENCE OF A COMMUNIQUE--AS POINTED OUT IN EMBASSY VIENTIANE'S 1680 AND SUBSEQUENT DEVELOPMENTS--SEEM TO CORROBORATE BELIEF THAT SOUPHANOUVONG FAILED.

6. COMMENTS BY CAMBODIANS OFFER RARE INSIGHTS INTO THINKING OF THESE MYSTERIOUS FOLK. THEIR ASSESSMENT OF HANOI'S INTENTIONS IS INTERESTING.  
O'DONOHUE

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